

## **AT YOUR BEST—How to Get Time, Energy & Priorities Working in Your Favor**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

xiii—You deserve to stop living at an unsustainable pace.

xiv—Most problems stem from having too much, not too little. Too many demands, opportunities, info, distractions, choices, people vying for attention, stuff on calendar.

xiv—According to a study of 7500 FT employees, 70% in 20's & 30's are experiencing some level of burn out.

xv—Unscientific and spontaneous poll of 800 leaders gathered—93% wrestling with some degree of burn out.

xv—Burn out is not inevitable.

xvi—You can get more accomplished in less time. Take control of your life and lead.

### **PART 1: THIS MUCH STRESS IS NOT OK**

#### **Chapter 1—Build A Life You Don't Want to Escape From**

Why Most of Us Secretly Resent the Life and Career We've so Carefully Built

3—George Eliot—"What we call our despair is often only the painful eagerness of unfulfilled hope."

5—Do you cheat sleep?

6—Do you feel like you are out of time, have little energy, not getting enough done?

7—Many people feel overwhelmed, overcommitted, and overworked doing exactly what they thought they wanted to do with their lives.

8—What is the price of stress? The American Psychological Association noted that the impact of stress can include headaches, chronic pain, shortness of breath, and full-on panic attacks. Stress has been linked to heartburn, acid reflux, bloating, nausea, indigestion, , inability to conceive. In addition, stress can adversely affect memory function, slow your reaction time, and create behavioral and mood disorders.

8—Stress can raise your cortisol levels, which in turn can spawn a host of physical and mental health issues, like chronic fatigue, diabetes, obesity, depression, and autoimmune disorders. Stress also linked to life threatening problems like heart attacks and strokes.

9—Burnout quiz/burnout indicator [www.atyourbesttoday.com](http://www.atyourbesttoday.com).

10-11—Survival is not your goal. Get honest with yourself. This is not a season. Be honest. Get real.

13—Workaholicism is, after all, the most rewarded addiction in the nation. You can get fired for drinking too much, but working too much usually gets you promoted. It also gets you a raise. Here's our script—busy is the default, slammed is normal, crazy time is all the time, life has been reduced to going through the motions.

13—Here's the good news...you don't have to live a life that stresses you out everyday.

14-15—Top performers move way past time management and are highly focused on managing not just their time but their energy.

15—Usually they had one thing in common: they did what they were best at when they were at their best.

15—In other words, they worked in their area of principal gifting and passion when their energy was at its highest during the day. Make this a keystone habit.

16—Every day you fight for how your time, energy, and priorities are spent. Learn to manage these three assets well.

20—Embrace an approach that will be more life-giving.

## **Chapter 2—No More Crazy Busy Life**

Live in a Way Today That Will Help You Thrive Tomorrow

22—There's more besides these three staples of beating stress-- 1)enough sleep, 2)physical exercise, 3)healthy relationships.

23—And time off won't heal you when the problem is how you spend your time on. Days off, vacations, and even sabbaticals aren't a complete solution for an unsustainable pace.

24—A sustainable pace is the solution for an unsustainable pace.

25—The Stress Spiral—unfocused time, unleveraged energy, hijacked priorities, overwhelmed, overcommitted, overworked.

26—Time famine—your to-do list only seems to expand and the gnawing sense of scarcity (“there's never enough time”) keep growing.

26—You need to leverage your energy. Unleveraged energy springs from failing to cooperate with your personal energy levels as they rise and fall over the course of the day.

27—Hijacked priorities happen when you allow other people to determine what you get done.

28—The Thrive Cycle: Doing What You're Best at When You're at Your Best.

28—The way to be at your best is to focus your time, leverage your energy, and realize your priorities.

28—Archimedes lever.

29—Strategies of the Thrive Cycle are the opposite to those of the Stress Spiral.

29—The Thrive Cycle (At Your Best)—Focused time, leveraged energy, realized priorities, thriving.

30—Green Zone vs. Yellow Zone vs. Red Zone.

32—Live in a way today that will help you thrive tomorrow.

33—Margin is space. It's room to breathe. Margin is rare. Create margin. Build in margin.

## **PART 2: FOCUS YOUR TIME**

### **Chapter 3—You Actually Do Have the Time**

Two Critical Mental Shifts About Time

45—When it comes to time, you are rich.

47—The opportunities available to a capable person always exceed the time available.

47—Time management strategies makes you more efficient but does it make you more effective. And where does energy management come in?

47—Changing how you focus time begins with changing how you think about time. Two mental shifts.

48-9—Mental Shift #1—Tell the truth about time. Stop saying you don't have the time. Start admitting you didn't make the time.

52—Mental Shift #2—Embrace Passion (and abandon balance).

53—John Wesley said—“Set yourself on fire with passion, and people will come from miles to watch you burn.”

54—What would be different at work, at home, with your kids, with your faith, with your neighbors and best friends, if you dove into everything you chose to do with passion?

54—Balanced people don't change the world. Passionate people do.

54—The key to living passionately is to focus your time on what is truly most important to you and to choose to do those things wholeheartedly, with enthusiasm. Stress makes you skim. Weariness wears you out, and when you have nothing left to give, it's too easy to coast.

55—Embracing passion also means you'll have to limit the things you decide to do. Thriving calls for a wholehearted embrace not of more but of less, done well.

55—Greg McKeown—“I can do anything, but not everything.” Which means to focus your time on the things and people that matter most.

56—Dream List: Priority(person/task I wish I had more time for). Time(approx. hours per week needed).

56—You can make excuses or you can make progress, but not both.

## **Chapter 4—Find Your Green Zone**

How to Uncover When You're at Your Best

59—Daniel Pink, *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*. According to Pink, 14% are morning people, 21 percent are night owls, and 65 percent of us are somewhere in the middle.

60—Even though you have 24 hours in the day, not all hours “feel” equal.

60—Claire Diaz-Ortiz, who worked at Twitter in the start-up years, said: even the most brilliant Silicon Valley engineers have about three creative and highly productive hours in them daily.

60—Cal Newport, author of *Deep Work*, has researched this quite extensively and argued that our capacity for intense, focused work comes in at around four hours/day.

61—Most people have only 3-5 deeply productive hours in a day when their energy is at its peak. That's it.

61—Researchers point to doctors circadian rhythms that make focusing harder in the afternoon.

63—Energy Clock—what is yours?

66-68—Green Zone=high energy. Red Zone=low energy. Yellow Zone=mid energy.

70—The value of paint—“its all in the application.” Unapplied strategies do nothing to change your life. For example, a basement full of unopened paint cans (zero effect).

73—Use each zone to maximum advantage.

73—Leverage your energy (or lack of it). Don't fight the patterns, fuel them.

## **PART 3: LEVERAGE YOUR ENERGY**

### **Chapter 5—Do What You're Best At**

Investing Your Energy for the Highest Returns

77—Seneca—“You must match time's swiftness with your speed in using it, and you must drink quickly as though from a rapid stream that will not always flow.”

79—While you have 24 equal hours in a day, not all hours feel equal or produce equally.

79—What are you best at?

80—Gifting + Passion + Impact = Optimal Green Zone Focus (Venn diagram—center optimal green zone)

81-83—Gifting is your sweet spot. What do you uniquely do best? Some questions to ask: What seems effortless to you and difficult to others? What talents do I keep using in different settings? What do other people affirm in me as my gifting and talent?

83-84—Passion is what you love to do. The key to finding your passion is to look for things that give you energy. Quote from Olympic Gold Medalist runner Eric Liddell in *Chariots of Fire*, “I believe that God made me for a purpose...He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.” Some questions to ask: What tasks do I most look forward to doing? What things energize me as I do them? When do I lose track of time because I'm enjoying what I'm doing so much?

84-86—Impact refers to those things that, when done, will make the biggest difference, sometimes in the moment but often long term. Ask yourself what the highest-value tasks are that your employer pays you to accomplish. What are your core responsibilities? What are your overriding goals? Some questions to ask: What can I do today in this season that will have a significantly positive impact? What few things, when done well will help me move the cause forward? What activities, when I repeatedly do them, help me make meaningful progress?

87—Leverage it.

88—Most people let days/things happen to them vs. making things happen.

88—Malcolm Gladwell explained how world-class performers develop their gifts in his book *Outliers*. The 10,000 hour rule argues that to become world-class at something—truly mastering a craft—is a combination of raw gifting and putting in 10,000 hours working on that craft.

89—Gifted people who put in 10,000 hours of practice and development are far more likely to become top of their field. That, Gladwell argues, is one of the most consistent stories behind success.

91—You cheat your gift when you use it but never take time to develop it. When you use your gift but never develop it, everybody loses.

## **Chapter 6—Yellow Zone, Red Zone, and Other Real-Life Problems**

How to Leverage Non-Optimal Times and Situations

94—William Goldman—“I must be overtired,” Buttercup managed. “The excitement and all.” Rest, then” her mother cautioned. “Terrible things can happen when you’re overtired. I was overtired the night your father proposed.”

95—Can’t get everything done in your Green Zone. So you need to match the remaining tasks to your remaining energy zones.

96—Yellow Zone is moderate energy so assign moderately important tasks. Red Zone is low energy so assign less important tasks then.

98—Challenge 1—I don’t have control over my work calendar. Key=focus on what you can control, not on what you can’t.

100—You and your time are far less controlled by other people than you think. So how much better can you do with the hours you do control?

101—Challenge 2—I’m not the CEO. But remember that the CEO chair comes with a unique set of stressors that almost offset the freedom you get. You still have freedoms and can flex your calendar in the direction of doing what you’re best at when you are at your best.

103—Challenge 3—I’ve got young kids or a difficult family situation. Adjust your expectations during this season of life as appropriate and needed.

105—Henry Ford—“Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you’re right.”

## **PART 4: REALIZE YOUR PRIORITIES**

### **Chapter 7—Hijacked**

Why It’s So Easy to Fall Perpetually Behind

111—Jerzy Gregorek—*Hard choices, easy life. Easy choices, hard life.*

114—Nobody will ever ask you to accomplish your top priorities. They will only ask you to accomplish theirs.

116—Your priorities get hijacked in three significant ways: by tasks you didn’t prioritize strategically, by your own tendency to get distracted, and of course, by people.

116—The wrong things always want your attention.

116-117—Stephen Covey (4 Categories) has pointed out the distinction between things that are urgent and things that are important. 1)Those things that are neither urgent nor important, 2)Those things that are urgent but not important, 3)Those things that are both urgent and important, 4)Those things that are important but not urgent.

117—What makes it more complicated is that you never pay an immediate price for skipping important but non-urgent things. The cost is always long term. Worse, the price only gets steeper the longer you ignore them.

118—Narrowing your focus. Pareto Principle—Italian engineer, sociologist, economist, political scientist, and philosopher Vilfredo Pareto observed that 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. Found to be true from economics to exercise.

119—So...Spend 80% of your time on that which produces 80% of your results.

120—What are the 20% of things you do that produce 80% of the results?

121—Without a strategy for saying no, you default to yes, and your life vaporizes with other people’s priorities being realized rather than yours.

122—Steve Jobs—“People think focus means saying yes to the thing you’ve got to focus on. But that’s not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully. I’m actually as proud of the things we haven’t done as the things I have done. Innovation is saying no to 1,000 things.”

124—A good no will lead to a great yes later.

## **Chapter 8—Distraction-Free**

How to Stop Interrupting Yourself

131—Average person touches their phone 2,617 times per day. Heavy users more like 5,427 times per day. (“left to my own devices”)

132—Consider the interruptions (doorbell analogy—imagine answering the door that many times).

133—You don’t need an enemy to interrupt you. You have one. It’s a perpetually distracted you.

133—Nir Eyal, book *Indistractable*, says that the opposite of distraction isn’t focus. The opposite of distraction is traction. Comes from the Latin word “to draw or pull” like a tractor, horse, or truck pulls things forward. Said simply, the reason you don’t have traction on the goals and priorities you’ve set for yourself is that you often get distracted.

133—Everyone is out for our attention (marketing). And if we are not careful we will become captivated by the unessential.

134—Getting distracted is expensive. Researchers say that it takes the average person 25 minutes to refocus after a single distraction.

134—Cal Newport argues, the ability to do deep work in our distracted culture is both increasingly rare and increasingly valuable. The opposite of deep work, Newport says, is shallow work. “Shallow work is non-cognitively demanding, logistical-style tasks, often performed while distracted.”

134—Every time you give your attention to something or someone, it costs you. Invested well, attention can pay big dividends. Invested poorly, not so much.

136—Mark Twain—did his writing in a cabin on his property so he could be completely undistracted for hours at a time. His family used a horn to let him know that meals were ready, so deep was his concentration. JK Rowling and Donald Miller still sequester themselves to do their work.

138—Renowned writer Vladimir Nabokov didn’t let circumstances limit his output. When his tiny flat didn’t have room for a desk he decided to write in the bathtub.

139—When you do what you’re best at when you’re at your best in the best conditions you can create, your work comes alive. And so do you.

140—Take a walk like Steve Jobs and others.

## **Chapter 9—What About People?**

What to Do When the Wrong People Want Your Attention and the Right People Don’t

149—People problems—when there were merely 4 people on Earth, the murder rate was 25%.

151—The people who most want to meet with you are rarely the people you most need to meet with.

152—Some people don’t want to get better. Clinical psychologist John Townsend said people like this have “a flat learning curve.”

154—So many leaders have nothing left to give because they’ve given it all away to people who, honestly, weren’t helped by the interaction.

155—Invest in your best.

156—How many friends can one human being have? British Anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar said that the maximum number of meaningful personal relationships most humans can cultivate is much smaller than you might assume. He said your limits are cognitive—they are hardwired.

157-8—Concentric Circles—Starting with Core and moving out.

- Best Friends, 3-5

- Friends, 12-15
- Tribe, 150
- Everyone else

161—The number of digital request is far bigger than the number you were designed to handle.

163—The principle is simple: stop treating everyone the same, because all relationships aren't the same.

## **PART 5: THEORY, MEET REAL LIFE**

### **Chapter 10—The Big Synch**

How to Synchronize Your Time, Energy, and Priorities Every Day

169—Henri Nouwen—*You don't think your way into a new kind of living but live your way into a new kind of thinking.*

171—Blank space on your calendar is a trap. It looks like freedom, but it is really jail disguised as liberty.

172—Control your calendar so others stop controlling you.

173—Decide how you'll spend your time before others decide for you.

175—Ernest Hemingway—prime writing hours, early mornings until about noon.

### **Chapter 11—Thrive On**

How to Recalibrate When Life Blows Up Your Perfectly Crafted Plan

187—Military Axiom—"No battle plan survives contact with the enemy.

189—Stress is a good bad word. Our culture hates stress yet thrives on it.

191—Wise people don't wait to adapt. If you can see overwhelm coming, if you feel it tapping at your door, get proactive. Don't wait to go under before you recalibrate.

191—In an overwhelmed culture, your agility is the cap on your ability.

192—Fix things before they break.

195—8 Key Recalibration Questions when facing change—

- What's taking my time that shouldn't be?
- What do I need more time to work on?
- What's wasting my time?
- How are my zones changing?
- Whom should I start meeting with?
- Whom should I stop meeting with anymore?
- What's changing in the nature of my inbound requests?
- What categories do I need to rethink?

196—Calculate:

- The % of time you spend alone versus with people
- The % of time you spend in meetings
- The % of time you spend at home versus on the road

197—What affects your energy and mood? How much time do you need with people vs alone?

197—CN %'s are now 60% alone, 40% w/ people

### **Chapter 12—Hello From the Future You**

It's Not Just What You Accomplish; It's Who You're Becoming

204—Dallas Willard—*What our life amounts to, at least for those who reach full age, is largely, if not entirely, a matter of what we become within.*

209—In the end, who you're becoming is so much more important than what you're doing.